

**PINKERTON ACADEMY**

**SPECIAL EDUCATION  
PROGRAM APPROVAL  
&  
IMPROVEMENT PROCESS**

**FINAL REPORT**

**1999-2000**

**Headmaster: Bradford V. Ek**  
**Special Education Director: Dr. Alan Pardy**

**PINKERTON ACADEMY  
FINAL REPORT  
1999-2000**

1. Introduction
2. The IDEA Team & Meeting dates
3. Data Reporting
4. Patterns and Trends
5. Improvement and Implementation Plan
6. Findings of Compliance Committee
7. Compliance/Corrective Action/Plan
8. Appendices

**Introduction:**

The "IDEA" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) Committee was formed in the Fall of 1999 in order to fulfill the requirements of using the "new process" for review of the special education programs and services at Pinkerton Academy. Members' names and the sub-committee structure are shown in **Appendix A**. In contrast to the "old process", the new one allows a school district or private facility to choose a focus question which will drive the activities of the committee over several months. Our focus question was the following:

**What factors contribute to the success of students with IEPs in regular classroom settings?**

From that focus question, we identified the need for the following sub-committees in order to (a) pursue different facets of the question, (b) gather data to answer the question(s), and (c) report the findings back to the full committee:

Data Analysis  
Surveys  
Compliance

Interviews  
Steering Committee  
Case Studies

The Steering Committee consisted of 7 individuals who participated in an orientation session held on Monday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, during which the

steps in the "new process" were outlined. This Steering Committee continued to meet during the course of the evaluation process to guide the larger, 29-member IDEA committee.

### The "New Process"

One of the characteristics of the "new process" is that the district or school can choose the area(s) it wishes to look at, and it can also select the various sources of data to explore those questions.

In our case, answering our **focus question** necessitated the involvement of the consumers (students and parents), as well as representatives from the sending districts of Derry, Hampstead and Chester.

Pinkerton is one of only 2 public academies in the state, the other being Coe-Brown Academy in Northwood. As such, Pinkerton provides special education services (by contract) to most of the students from its three sending towns, as well as to other districts by individual student placement at Pinkerton (typically in the ACT program).

### **The IDEA Team**

The Pinkerton IDEA team, consisting of 29 members, was the largest such team ever assembled in New Hampshire under the "new" process of program evaluation,. (Members are listed in **Appendix A.**)

The full IDEA Committee met a total of 7 times, with meetings held on the following dates: Monday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, Wed., October 13<sup>th</sup>, Wed., November 10<sup>th</sup>, Wed. December 8<sup>th</sup>, Wed., Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>, 2000, Wed., March 8<sup>th</sup>, and Wed. May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2000 to review the draft of this report. Agendas from each meeting are in **Appendix B.**

The IDEA Committee had to decide which sources of data to consider. In addition to existing case files, the following sources were available:

- Grade reports and transcripts
- Attendance and discipline data
- Drop-out rates and reasons
- Graduate follow-up surveys

- Current student & parent surveys
- Staff interviews
- Administrative interviews
- Outside agency perspectives
- Sending district perspectives

The full committee chose to pursue all of the above except drop-out rates and reasons for leaving; analyzing why students with IEPs leave before graduating is a recommendation from the Data Analysis committee. All of the other data sources listed were used for purposes of this report.

### **Data Reporting - The Work of the Sub-Committees**

Sub-committees met during and between the full IDEA committee meetings. Each sub-committee had a chairperson (or 2 co-chairs), keeping track of their work through their own minutes. Staff members were granted Staff Development hours for the time spent on this work, by prior arrangement with Pinkerton's Staff Development Committee.

Each sub-committee met and developed its own work plan, and updated the larger IDEA Committee at each of the full committee's meetings. The Data Analysis Committee, chaired by Rick Sharp, made its members available to the other sub-committees as they gathered their information, and then began the work of condensing the large amounts of information into one report, which was presented to the full IDEA committee on March 8<sup>th</sup>. The Case Study Committee report was delivered on the same date (3-8-00) and was then reviewed by the Data Analysis committee and summarized.

At this point, the work of the larger IDEA Committee was nearly over, and the work of what Pinkerton called its 7-member "Steering Committee" began. The Steering Committee reviewed all of the data and recommendations from the smaller sub-committees, in order to begin the preparation of the final report and the related improvement plan. The Steering Committee met several times over the course of the 1999-2000 school year.

As the Steering Committee began to consider the task of putting the final report together, each sub-committee chairperson was asked to review their data, and to provide the 7 member Steering Committee with a summary, using the following categories (these were the same categories chosen by the Steering Committee early in the process):

- Communication
- Culture/Acceptance
- What's Working
- What's Not Working
- Resources/Training
- Other

Members of the seven-member "Steering Committee" included the following:

- Brad Ek, Headmaster
- Nancy Kelble, Resource Teacher, Special Ed. Department
- Dr. Carol Langelier, Guidance Dept.
- Michael Morin, Social Studies Department Head
- Dr. P. Alan Pardy, Director of Special Education
- Rick Sharp, Assistant Director of Special Education
- Charles Varney, Asst. Headmaster for Attendance/Discipline

The summaries from each sub-committee were then reviewed by the Steering Committee on April 19<sup>th</sup>, as part of the preparation of the final report.

Sub-committee report summaries are contained within **Appendix C**.

## PATTERNS AND TRENDS

**Patterns:** A reliable sample of traits, tendencies, or other observable characteristics of a group system.

**Trends:** A general direction or movement over the course of time.

*(From SERESC template for Final Report, revised 1999-2000)*

What we found as a **pattern** amongst the various sources of data was the following:

1. *Some* individuals from different groups expressed lack of knowledge, frustration, or feeling of being "unsure" about various aspects of special education at Pinkerton Academy;
2. *Parents and students*, both past and present, were generally satisfied with the special education services they or their children had received (or were presently receiving);
3. Paperwork and compliance to state procedures varied somewhat from district to district(See Compliance section for more detail);
4. Communication across departments and across a large campus, is perceived as being *in need of improvement*;
5. The wide array of programs and commitment of staff is impressive;
6. Training of regular ed staff (*in IEPs, modifications, collaboration and the law*) was perceived as a need;
7. IEPs and other "paperwork" are perceived as problematic by regular ed staff;
8. There is a perception from some staff that students "use" special education status to avoid work and get unfair advantages;
9. *Visiting team members and the Derry on-site report noted a concern* that not all students are eligible to earn a diploma;

### **Trend(s):**

In order for a "trend" to be noted, there needs to be data gathered over time. One area that is being followed is that of students who drop out from special education at Pinkerton. *This was a concern noted in the Derry on-site exit meeting.*

The data for the 1998-99 school year is shown below:

*In the 1998-99 school year, a total of 76 students left Pinkerton special education programs for various reasons. That data is contained in Appendix D.*

Data for the 1999-2000 school year (through May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2000) indicated that 72 students with IEPs had left Pinkerton before for various reasons. That data is contained in Appendix D.

Another area that can be followed over time is that of passing grades. The data for the 1999-00 school year is shown below; comparison with the previous year (or two) would help in describing any **trend** that may be occurring.

#### Grade data for the 1999-2000 school year

At the mid-year point, special education students received a total of 1959 passing grades (D or better) out of a total of 2176 grades or 90%.

At the end of the third quarter, special education students received a total of 1781 passing grades (D or better), out of a total of 2100 grades, or 85%.

The third area that can be tracked longitudinally is that of discipline and attendance. For the highest risk population, those with emotional disorders, *there is information collected by the discipline and attendance offices for students in the TEHP program. That data should be analyzed for year-to-year comparisons.*

Overall, we *believe* that the rate of discipline incidents for the 1999-2000 school year is **lower** than the numbers for the 1998-99 school year, but there has not been a detailed study of those numbers.

Analyzing these various sources of data could lead us to describe **trends**. However, without a detailed analysis of multi-year data, we are unable at this time to describe any **trend**

## **PINKERTON ACADEMY IDEA REPORT IMPROVEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

As part of the IDEA self-evaluation process, a Steering Committee of seven individuals examined all of the data gathered through the efforts of various sub-committees (Surveys, Interviews, Case Studies, Compliance and Data Analysis). Sub-committees were asked to consider their data under the following categories:

- Communications
- Culture/Acceptance
- What's Working
- What's Not Working
- Training/Resources
- Other

After reviewing and discussing the findings, summaries and conclusions of each of the 5 sub-committees, the Steering Committee (Brad Ek, Mike Morin, Alan Parady, Rick Sharp, Carol Langelier, Chuck Varney and Nancy Kelble) came to an agreement on the following recommendations. Each section of recommendations is addressed by an action plan in the next section of this report, with proposed activities covering a three-year period.

The recommendations of the Compliance sub-committee, along with corrective actions specific to compliance issues, are contained in the Compliance section of this report.

First, however, there were many areas that different sub-committees identified as positive...

### What's Working?

Comments from the Interview sub-committee(Gale Christensen, Chair, Susan LeBoeuf,Candy Andrews, Chuck Varney) included the following:

**Many kids are getting good vocational training and job experience.**

**Many good programs with good staff, making a difference to many students. A good "menu" of program options.**

Comments from the Survey sub-committee (Sandra Belair, Pauline Guilbeault, Carol Langelier, Betsy McCall, and Deb Sadowski)included:



**“Most SPED and regular ed students felt that IEPs were a significant factor in helping students achieve success. They also recorded that they had sufficient involvement in the development, implementation and review of their IEPs. Overall, parents were very satisfied with the SPED services provided to students at Pinkerton.”**

From the Case Studies sub-committee (Cheryl Boucher, Janet Conrad, Brad Ek, Alan Hall, Nancy Kelble, Chris Kellan, Paula Marini, Nancy Shrull):

**"The programs available to special needs students are varied and provide adequate support. The educational plans do address each student's strengths and weaknesses."**

In addition to many strong points, including a dedicated special education staff, administration and trustees committed to providing the necessary resources, and good working relationships with the sending district special education directors, there were a number of areas that were found to need some attention. (See pages 9 through 11)

The Recommendations section, and the Action Plans that follow, are the result of discussions within the Steering Committee, using the data collected by four sub-committees (Surveys, Compliance, Case Studies, and Interview), and then analyzed and summarized by the Data Analysis Committee. Summaries of each sub-committee's work are found in Appendix C of this report.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Communication

1. A variety of options needs to be in place to increase the effectiveness of communication between special and regular education staff.
2. Existing communication systems (progress reports, voice mail, direct teacher contact with parents, face-to-face meetings, etc.) should be looked at to determine effectiveness, efficiency and compliance with special ed law and regulation requirements.
3. Regular education staff need to identify the resources they need to implement IEPs, asking for support from special education department as needed.
4. More information needs to be provided to parents regarding their child's disability and the impact on their school achievement.

### Culture and Acceptance

1. Establish systematic information sessions for regular education students and faculty, regarding special education students' needs, diversity, etc.
2. Develop public statement regarding inclusion at Pinkerton as part of overall organizational mission statement(s) and put into all publications.
3. Continue to provide all new staff with information on inclusion, special education programs, and how they will be involved with special education students, and consider providing additional information.
4. Create pre-referral process through regular education and guidance, with administrative support of pre-referral and 504 as preventative measures to assist students.
5. Develop inter-departmental agreement/document, endorsing the "top ten" classroom modifications that would be (1) good instructional practices and (2) appropriate modifications for many students with learning disabilities.

### Training/Resources

1. Plan and implement on-going staff development for all staff, regarding the following topics:
  - Legal basis for special education
  - Requirements for regular education staff
  - Differences between 504 and special education
  - How students become identified
  - Developing and implementing IEPs
  - Reading and understanding test scores on IEPs
2. Encourage all teachers to make one annual visit to special education program at Pinkerton, as one of their required inter-departmental visitations.
3. Build special education training into the Master Plan for staff development at Pinkerton.
4. Consider establishing one jointly-staffed resource room per year, such as an academic department's student support room, with one special education resource teacher based there in the 2001-2002 school year.
5. Provide information to all staff regarding pre-referral and 504 plans.

### Other

1. Continue to review data on special education students who have dropped out of Pinkerton over the past 2-3 years.
2. Continue to analyze the number and types of referrals during the past 2 years, and continue tracking system in place.
3. Develop consistent paperwork with sending districts, possibly using State forms that comply with IDEA 1997 regulations.
4. Consider the implementation of an alternative diploma for students unable to earn the standard Pinkerton diploma.

5. Review the success of students formerly in C-Modified classes in order to determine if special education students in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades need more academic support.
6. Expand opportunities to recognize and celebrate the successes of students with disabilities at Pinkerton.
7. Consider aligning IEPs with Pinkerton curriculum (course syllabi, course descriptions, etc.) along with consideration of State curriculum frameworks.

### ACTION PLANS

Each Recommendation from the preceding pages is repeated here, with an Action Plan suggested by the Steering Committee.

**The Recommendations are in bold type.**

#### Communication

- 1. A variety of options need to be considered to increase the effectiveness of communication between special and regular education staff.**

ACTION: Establish an inter-departmental committee, chaired by an administrator, to include classroom teachers, one or more representatives from special education, a person skilled in electronic communication and at least one district representative and one parent, to review all present communication systems in place.

This committee to file report with headmaster by January 31st, 2001.

- 2. Existing communication systems (progress reports, voice mail, direct teacher contact with parents, face-to-face meetings, etc.) should be looked at to determine effectiveness, efficiency and compliance with special ed law and regulation requirements.**

ACTION: See Action under item #1, above.

3. **Regular education staff need to identify the resources they need to implement IEPs, with support coming from special education as needed.**

ACTION: See Action under item #1, above.

4. **More information needs to be provided to parents regarding their child's disability and the impact on school achievement.**

ACTION: Special Education department will develop single-page descriptions of the Special Ed process, Resources available at Pinkerton, and individual descriptions of Learning Disabilities, Language Disabilities, Reading Disabilities, Emotional Disabilities and Cognitive Disabilities. Documents to be ready for distribution by November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000.

### Culture and Acceptance

1. **Establish systematic information sessions for regular education students and faculty, regarding special education students' needs, diversity, etc.**

ACTION: a Training Plan will be developed by the Special Education department, in conjunction with the Pinkerton Staff Development Committee, to include the topics noted under Recommendation #1 in the Training/Resources section. Additional sessions will be offered on an invitational basis for all faculty on various topics, for staff development credit hours, during the work day or during summer vacation period.

A survey will be developed for all faculty, to assess their interest in, and opinions about, various topics, before and after the training and information sessions during each of the three years (2000-2001 through 2002-2003).

2. **Develop public statements regarding inclusion at Pinkerton as part of overall organizational mission statement(s) and put into all publications.**

ACTION: A statement will be developed by the Special Education department, aligning the philosophy of inclusionary education with the mission statement(s) of Pinkerton Academy. After administrative review and approval, this will be submitted to the trustees for endorsement and for inclusion in Course Catalog, the Student and the Faculty Handbook for the 2001-2002 school year.

- 3. Continue to provide all new staff with information on inclusion, special education programs, and how they will be involved with special education students and consider providing additional information.**

ACTION: Special Education Department will continue to provide annual orientation session to all new faculty, in conjunction with administration, to review Special Education Department resources available, special education law and requirements, referral and identification process, and implementing IEPs.

- 4. Create pre-referral process through regular education and guidance, with administrative support of pre-referral and 504 as preventative measures to assist students.**

ACTION: A pre-referral process will be formally established through the Guidance Department, and endorsed by the administration as part of the regular education process at Pinkerton. A formal system of written "referral" from regular teachers, followed by systematic review of the student's situation will be established. Participants in pre-referral will include one or more of the student's teachers, his/her guidance counselor, and a representative from special education as requested.

- 5. Develop inter-departmental agreement/document, endorsing the "top ten" classroom modifications that would be (1) good instructional practices and (2) appropriate modifications for many students with learning disabilities.**

ACTION: The Special Education Department will develop a "top ten" classroom modification list in conjunction with regular classroom teachers, reflecting sound instructional practices. This list will be submitted to department heads and administration for review and comment, and then distributed to teachers through department heads.

Training/Resources**1. Plan and implement on-going staff development for all staff, on the following topics:**

**Legal basis for special education**  
**Requirements for regular education staff**  
**Differences between 504 and special education**  
**How students become identified**  
**Developing and implementing IEPs**  
**Reading and understanding test scores on IEPs**

ACTION: A Training Series will be developed by the Special Education Department, in conjunction with the Staff Development Committee, utilizing some of the early release days scheduled for the 2000-2001 school year. All sessions will carry staff development credit, with selected sessions required of all staff.

**2. Encourage all teachers to make one annual visit to a special education program at Pinkerton, as one of their two required inter-departmental visitations.**

ACTION: Administration will approve the inclusion of one visit to resource rooms or other special education programs as counting toward the requirement of two "inter-departmental" visitations each year.

**3. Build special education training into the Master Plan for staff development at Pinkerton Academy.**

ACTION: A member of the Special Education Department will serve on the Staff Development committee, or will regularly attend the open meetings of that committee. Specific mention of training for all staff topics related to special education will be part of the Master Plan developed by Pinkerton Academy.

- 4. Consider establishing one jointly-staffed resource room per year, with one special education resource teacher based in an academic department beginning with the 2001-2002 school year**

ACTION: One special education resource teacher will be assigned to an academic support room as his/her "base", to work alongside the teachers assigned to that room. The Resource teacher's caseload (est. at 25-30) will report to that room as their Resource period. This arrangement will be evaluated by both department heads, with a report to be provided to the administration at the end of each semester.

- 5. Provide information to all staff regarding pre-referral and 504 plans.**

ACTION: A pre-referral system, once approved by the administration, will be described on paper, and circulated to all staff. It will be reviewed at a full faculty meeting during the 2000-2001 school year.

Section 504 information will be presented to all faculty at a full faculty meeting before the start of the 2000- 2001 school year.

#### Other

- 1. Continue to review data on special education students who have dropped out of Pinkerton over the past 2-3 years.**

ACTION: Special Education Department will review all special education students who dropped out during the 1998-99 and 1999-2000 school year, tabulating the reason(s), sorting by town and by program. Follow-up data will also be collected from the sending districts to determine the educational outcomes or current situation of those students. Recommendations will be made quarterly to the Administration by the Special Education department.

- 2. Continue to analyze the number and types of referrals during the past 2 years, and continue tracking system in place.**

ACTION: An annual summary will be compiled by the Special Education Department and shared with the administration, noting sources of referrals, disposition, and current status of those students referred during each year. A joint on-going committee will meet quarterly to review all referrals, with membership consisting of representatives from Guidance, regular education teachers, Administration, and special education.



**3. Develop consistent paperwork with sending districts, possibly using State forms that comply with IDEA 1997 regulations.**

ACTION: A standing item with the meetings held at Pinkerton for all sending district representatives will be the coordination of paperwork so that the Pinkerton paperwork conforms as closely as possible to state-recommended forms and procedures.

**4. Consider the implementation of an alternative diploma for students unable to earn the standard Pinkerton diploma.**

ACTION: A committee will be established to consider the subject of access for all students to a diploma, as required by IDEA 1997. Members will include a representative from each sending district.

**5. Review the success of students formerly in C-modified classes in order to determine if special education students in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades need more academic support.**

ACTION: Grade performance and graduation rates will be analyzed for students previously served by the C-modified program at Pinkerton, looking at data for students who were in C-mod since the 1996-97 school year.

**6. Expand opportunities to recognize and celebrate the successes of students with disabilities at Pinkerton.**

ACTION: Special Education department will increase the public recognition of students with IEPs, in addition to Success Night and recognition of Special Olympians during the Sports Award Night, in order to highlight a variety of successes of students with disabilities.

**7. Consider aligning IEPs with Pinkerton curriculum (course syllabi, course descriptions, etc.) along with consideration of state curriculum frameworks.**

ACTION: A small committee, with representatives from English, Math, Social Studies and Science, will meet with one or more representatives from special education and the administration, to review the content of IEP objectives, considering ways to align future IEPs with existing course content objectives and/or the NH Frameworks.

## CONCLUSIONS

Earlier this year, we began our inquiry into the factors that lead to success of students with IEPs in regular education settings. With the efforts of all 29 members of our IDEA committee, we surveyed, interviewed, reviewed files, discussed, questioned, pondered, wondered, gathered data, and tried to make sense of all this.

What we have concluded is that it takes at least the “3-Cs” – Communication, Cooperation and Collaboration of all the adults involved, and a 4<sup>th</sup> “C”, of Commitment by the student to achieve success, which includes each student taking ownership and responsibility for his/her learning.

With all of its frustrating aspects – the paperwork, the procedures, the large teams that must reach consensus to make decisions, the special education process works for most students who have an IEP (Individual Education Plan).

Among other things, we also learned that many of our consumers – parents and students – have been satisfied with the services provided to them by Pinkerton, but that there are some things that we need to do better.

Informing parents about their child’s disability and the impact on learning, creating conditions that foster collaboration between regular and special education staff, and providing the necessary support to regular classroom teachers, are some of the things that we can do to help us to achieve our goal of success for all students!

A Final Note: Thanks again to everyone who participated in formulating the question, in gathering the data, and in preparing this report.

Thanks also to our SERESC (Southeastern Regional Education Service Center) consultant, Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu, who worked with our committee during the entire process, offering encouragement and making suggestions that kept us on track.